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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 002627

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: INCREASING NUMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL SEEKING
TO RETURN TO BAGHDAD FROM JORDAN

REF: STATE 114629

Classified By: Charge Gregory L. Berry. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Over the past week, Embassy Amman, Task Force West, units deployed in Iraq, and CENTCOM HQ have worked jointly to facilitate the movement of several foreign diplomatic convoys into Baghdad from Amman, following requests from those diplomatic missions (see list para 3) asking for guidance and/or assistance with such travel. Our standard response has been that the U.S. military has declared the Amman-Baghdad Highway to be permissive, although random acts of banditry have occurred and coalition forces are not in a position to provide escorts to diplomatic convoys. We have noted that in Baghdad security is less firm, that the coalition is unable to provide security for specific diplomatic properties, and diplomats going there must assume a certain amount of risk.

2. (C) Despite our efforts to discourage them, all the diplomatic convoys that intended to travel did so -- apparently as a result of decisions made in capitals. In each case, we (through Task Force West and CENTCOM HQ) passed on all the particulars we received to U.S. military units forward-deployed in western Iraq. The foreign diplomats who have returned have done so for two stated purposes: (1) to check on the status of their diplomatic property in Baghdad and (2) to re-open their missions and/or provide consular services to their nationals in Iraq. Common questions that have arisen include: (a) Whether the U.S. military would provide any protection to their personnel either en route to or in Baghdad; and (b) who/what is the appropriate point of contact for them in Baghdad when they arrive. We will convey information contained in reftel with missions that contact us from this point forward regarding prospective travel to Iraq.

3. (C) To date, diplomats from the following countries have traveled to Baghdad from Amman, or intend to do so shortly: Jordan, Spain, Vietnam, Thailand, People's Republic of China, Japan, Germany, Korea, Singapore, and Nigeria. In addition, the Dutch mission here asked if the coalition could provide transport into Baghdad for one Dutch diplomat who is recovering from a compound leg fracture and cannot make the difficult 12-hour drive from Amman.

4. (C) Comment: Since the decisions to reopen missions to Iraq are made in capitals, we have been unable to dissuade any diplomatic travelers from going to Baghdad. We would appreciate clarification of reftel indication that coalition forces on the Jordan-Iraq border will in future prevent foreign diplomats from entering Iraq without prior authorization. If this is the case, we would appreciate an explanation of the approval process (including initial points of contact) so we can explain it to would-be travelers in Amman.
BERRY